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The Woman's Building: The Images and Roles of the Nineteenth-Century Women*

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本論文は、19世紀アメリカにおける女性のイメージと性役割を、1893年に開催されたシカゴ万国博覧会を通して浮き彫りにするものである。考察に当たっては近年、米国ペンシルバニア州立大学ハリスバーグ校のアリス＝マーシャル・コレクションにおいて発見された貴重な第一次文献から直接的な分析を試みた。19世紀アメリカ社会における女性運動の高まりの中、シカゴ万博の大規模な「女性館」(Woman's Building)が人々の注目を集めた。女性による初の本格的運営が行われた女性館は、19世紀の様々な女性解放運動による既存の女性像の変革と、新たな女性の価値観を反映する象徴であるとして賞賛された。しかし、歴史家アラン＝トラクテンバーグは、シカゴ万博に関する論文、“The White City”において、女性館に投影された当時の女性像の“ambiguity”を批判的に捉え、女性館に反映されていたのは変革された女性像ではなく、むしろ変革に揺れ動く“ambiguous”な女性像であったとしている。そこで本研究では、彼が提示した“ambiguity”をキーワードとしつつ、女性館の総合的な分析を通して、そこに反映された女性像の“ambiguity”の実態を捉えようとする。トラクテンバーグの論文が第二次文献を中心としているのに対し、本考察は当時の第一次資料に基づき、独自の視点から各種文献の引用・解釈を試みた点に重要性があると考ええる。こうした当時の女性像に対する批判的な考察によって、19世紀末のアメリカ女性が既存の「ヴィクトリア的女性像」と「20世紀の新しい女性像」の価値観や性役割の間でいかに葛藤し、いかなる認識を持っ

*シカゴ万国博覧会・女性館における19世紀アメリカの女性像(関口英里)

**言語文化研究科博士前期課程

て女性解放の過渡期を経験していたのか、という実態が明らかにされるだろう。

Introduction

This paper interprets the images and roles of women in the nineteenth century, looking at the national event of the World Exposition. The main focus is on the Woman's Building in The Chicago World's Fair in 1893, with reference to valuable primary sources of that time such as brochures and documents printed for the exposition that were recently rediscovered in the Alice Marshall Collection, Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg¹⁾.

In nineteenth-century America, the idea of separate spheres of men and women had been established because of the division of labor by sex under the development of the market economy. Needless to say, the women's sphere was "home," which was the complete opposite to the men's sphere, described as the "world" or "production." Victorian women were expected to be pure, merciful, pious, self-sacrificing and good mothers of the republic as a social keeper of love and home. However, women fostered the foothold of advancement to society, based on their peculiar consciousness as women. In other words, the development of educational opportunities to be good mothers and to raise good children, the unity of sisterhood, and many other social activities, like temperance or abolitionism, which were regarded as proper things for the morals and virtues of women, enabled them to go beyond the sphere of home ultimately. This sprout of the women's movement developed into feminism and the women's rights movement, such as suffrage.

¹⁾ A private collection of women's history materials collected by Alice Kahler Marshall, was acquired by Penn State University in 1991. It is a compilation of 400 years of women's history and considered one of the most comprehensive collection in the United States. There are more than 7000 books and pamphlets, 400 periodicals, and thousands of other items. Subject categories cover all areas of women's lives, including expositions.

1 The Woman's Building and its Ambiguous Images

In an atmosphere with an increasing tendency toward the liberation of women, the Chicago World's Fair opened in 1893. This exposition observed the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World, and offered perspectives on the situations of society and culture in the United States at that time. At the Fair, the Woman's Building drew considerable attention because it was the first attempt at women's thorough management and a Board of Lady Managers was organized. Most people, both men and women, as well as visitors, sponsors and critics focused only on the bright side of the Woman's Building and expressed rather optimistic appraisals of women's advancement in this era. However, one American historian, Alan Trachtenberg, has recently looked at women's roles and images in the Woman's Building from a more circumspect viewpoint. He has directed his attention to the "ambiguity" observed in not only the Woman's Building but also in the women's images and roles themselves. In the essay "White City," which describes the World's Columbian Fair, Trachtenberg expresses his view of the women's role in the World's Fair: "The very prominence of women at the Fair heightened the ambiguities in their conceived role" (Trachtenberg 221). This paper takes up Trachtenberg's view of "ambiguous" images and roles of women in the late nineteenth century as a key-concept. However, it is true that Trachtenberg's argument involves an inevitable limit because he only refers to secondary sources. Consequently, this essay, which refers to and quotes from primary resources in the nineteenth century, offers a study with greater validity and originality than Trachtenberg's argument. Through investigations of the exhibits, one of the events at Woman's Building called the "Congress of Women" and the administration of the Board of Lady Managers, I would like to grasp how they reflected "ambiguity" of women's images and roles at the turn of the "progressive" nineteenth century.

2 The Woman's Building and its Exhibitions

First, as Trachtenberg also mentions in his essay, what attracts attention is the structure of the Building. Besides the document which he quotes, you can find other expressions in a document at that time about the "feminine beauty" of the building designed by Sophia G. Hayden. For example, you can find such a description: "Our building is essentially feminine in character; it has the qualities of reserve, delicacy, and refinement. Its strength is veiled in grace; its beauty is gently impressive" (Elliott 35). The writer also applies the terms of "sweetness and light," "elegance" and "harmony" (Elliott 35-38) to the Woman's Building. These quotes indicate that this solemnity and delicacy were the appreciated images of the majority at this time. When you look at the composition inside the building, the first point to notice is the considerable space for the kitchen. Consulting with the official floor plan, you will notice that it took northern quarter of the second floor. During the Fair, many cooking lectures took place there, and they attracted a large number of women. This fact means that domestic work was given important attention and still placed as the central part of the women's life at the time of the Fair.

Referring to the paintings, such as "Primitive Women," "Modern Women" and the other housing exhibits, Trachtenberg reads the women's role of "welcoming her men home" and "domestic labor, virtue, and order" (Trachtenberg 221-22) in them. In addition to those exhibits that he mentions, in accordance with the descriptions and the graphics in the book, *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building*, in 1894, most of the exhibits depict the motif of women's nature, motherhood, peacefulness, fragility, purity, and domestic work. As far as the paintings were concerned, 16 out of 33 pictures, which depict women's figures in this book, feature home, children and nature as their motifs. For the most significant example, a decorative panel named "The women of Plymouth" (by Lucia Fairchild) depicts the group of women engaged in domestic labor in the fields in spring. There are the figures of young women and mothers, who are washing dishes, spinning, holding infants, and one woman is teaching children. Needless to say, this picture signifies the expected women's

roles and images that I mentioned above. To ensure the comprehension of the idea of this time, Maude Howe Elliott, the writer as well as editor of this book, writes about this painting in her essay "The Building and Its Decorations":

It is an assertion of the prime duties of woman, the home-maker and care-taker ... reminding us that the higher education now open to our sex makes women better and wiser wives and mothers. (Elliott 47)

The other significance in sculptures and bronze as well as paintings is the proportions of women. They are shaped lithe and graceful, and more slender compared with the productions of the former eras. These women's figures reflect the change of ideas about women's figures, which attracted both men and women, particularly in the 1890's, when the "New Women" emerged. All of these are women's productions, and Mrs. Potter Palmer, the manager of the Women's Board, rhetorically comments about these women's great works of art as a "marvelous display of genius and skill" (Palmer 1893, 437) and she also states, "They are typical of woman and woman's work in history. The beautiful group illustrative 'Woman's Virtues' includes figures representing 'Sacrifice,' 'Charity,' 'Maternity,' and 'Love.'" (Palmer 1893, 447) In the other essay, she also says, "The brush and chisel have sought to give form and reality to the visions haunting the brain of the artist" (Palmer 1894b, 429). From this statement, consequently, if these productions and exhibits by female artists had represented their own ideas and imagination about women, the women of that era should assign the stereotypical image and role of women in the former Victorian period to themselves. In other words, it automatically means that Palmer's rhetoric of women's "genius and skill" was still mostly significant in the sense of domesticity, virtue, and morality in the early nineteenth century.

3 The Congress of Women: What is "Progressive"?

As one of the most important events in the Woman's Building, the Congress of Women suggests how progressive women leaders viewed "modern women" in that era. According to the document in 1893 by Ellen M. Henrotin, "It will represent the progress of women since the discovery of continent in 1492" (Henrotin 419), and the subjects were, for example, moral and social reforms, philanthropy and charity, religion, government, education, and home and family. Speaking of the Congress, Trachtenberg claims:

Champions of women's political rights and of radical reform were accorded places at the Congress ... But they did not appear among the more socially proper figures of the Lady Managers, nor did militant notes ring prominently in the exhibitions. Instead, the prevailing note was domesticity, the unique, and uniquely virtuous, powers of women as mothers, homemakers, teachers and cooks. (Trachtenberg 221)

In the lecture titled "The Home of the Future" (by L.C. McGee), the speaker discusses women's social advance and commented, "But that she has thus gone out from the home is to be the regret of the future" (McGee 249). She appreciates that women have power in the home and society, but their ideas are persistently based on the general belief of that time, which is emphasized by different abilities and characters of men and women, particularly in the mental as well as physical aspect. You can find one clue to this from the word "naturally" in McGee's following passage:

It is unquestionable that men do and are to hold the places of distinction. So let it be. They are naturally fitted for leadership in executive, legislative, judicial and commercial activities. They have the brain and the virile character which eminently qualifies them to direct the affairs and the thought of the world. (McGee 251)

Next, in the statement of "The Home and Its Future," Annis Ford Eastman expresses a rather passive idea:

We can not bring about, in a moment, the changes in the minds of men and women ... but the great aim, the service of the world, this for us all. Make your home great by great aims. (Eastman 615)

This comment, especially the rhetorical words "service of the world," apparently indicates that the women's "great aims" were to be good mothers and moral wives and contributed to the men's sphere of the "world."

The title "Characteristics of The Modern Women" (by Caroline K. Sherman) sounds progressive, but is not so progressive in its contents. While Sherman appreciates the modern women's active movements, she comments as follows: "Woman's influence will radically change the character of public affairs is not to be anticipated" (Sherman 766). She also insists on the mental inferiority of women, just as McGee does, but does not forget to emphasize their "moral ability."

The inexactness of women and their inability to tell the truth not from lack of moral sincerity ... women can not have that subtlety of analysis and sustained power of reasoning which is absolutely essential to the correct investigation of any subject, philosophical or scientific. (Sherman 768)

Given the fact that she was a member of the Board of Lady Managers, her ideas about women's social movement should have been progressive and positive, but her perspective seems to be limited as is implied in the following passage:

This large opportunity for women does not necessarily imply greater improvement on their part. It may be said that women in the future, as in the past, will still continue to live in the narrow routine of a circum-

scribed life. (Sherman 767)

Other than these statements, there is a speech entitled "Woman's Sphere From a Woman's Stand Point" (by Laura De Force Gordon), but it does not contain the radical ideas that provoked women to break their sphere. She insists that the woman should pursue her roles in the women's sphere. Furthermore, Gordon, mentioning women's political advancement, says, "This enlargement of women's activities will make her stronger and purer in her home" (Gordon 76). After all, what one might grasp from all these documents is that women in this era, even those who had achieved the status as leaders, seemed to have been still in the position of keeping their separate sphere and roles, even though they tried to advance to the world of social activities. This idea is ensured and becomes clearer when one looks at the fact that the women's rights movement at that time proceeded under the ideology based on the women's sphere and the different roles of the sexes, which believed that women's special abilities (such as purity and morality) could improve society as well as home. From this standpoint, Trachtenberg's idea of "ambiguity" in women's roles becomes more realistic and persuasive.

4 Board of Lady Managers

As my last argument concerning the Woman's Building, I would like to focus on the Board of Lady Managers and its administration. Trachtenberg does not discuss this in detail, but it is a crucial point to think about when considering the woman's role in the World's Fair.

4.1 Designing the Woman's Building

First of all, at the beginning of the Board, there was a serious argument about their exhibition. Mrs. Potter Palmer, the head of the Board of Lady Managers, describes it in her essay, "The Growth of The Woman's Building":

Upon the assembling of the Board of Lady Managers in Chicago, we found that the first important duty to be settled was whether the work of women at the Fair should be shown separately or in conjunction with the work of men under the general classifications. (Palmer 1894a, 19)

She regards this as a burning question because many women were somewhat ambivalent about separating women's contributions in a separate building; why not compete on an equal basis with men throughout the fair? However, Palmer insists on the separate exhibit for the following reasons:

Those who favored a separate exhibit believing that the extent and variety of the valuable work done by women would not be appreciated or comprehended unless shown in a building separate from the work of men. On the other hand, the most advanced and radical thinkers felt that the exhibit should not be one of *sex*, but of *merit*, and that women had reached the point where they could afford to compete side by side with men, with a fair chance of success, and that they would not *value* prizes given upon the sentimental basis of sex. (Palmer 1894a, 19)

This problem directly reflects the disparity in the women's rights movement between moderate social reformers and radical suffragists at that time. Finally, it was decided that the women's exhibition would take place in a separate Women's Building, a victory for moderate reformers whose activities were based on the idea of the separate sex roles of women. In other words, this decision meant the establishment of the "women's sphere" in society as well as in the World's Columbian Fair. As one example that reflected this point of view, I can take up the Children's Building. From this idea of women's roles, it is not difficult to understand that the Children's Building was strongly associated with the Woman's Building because raising of children was unquestionably one of the important roles of women at that time. The document at the time of the Fair tells us about the relationship between the Children's Building and the Board of Lady Managers:

The Board of Lady Managers assumed the responsibility of raising the money for such a building ... since it had no aid from the exposition authorities proper and the whole plan had to be wrought out within the briefest possible time and in the face of almost entire apathy upon the part of the outside public ... And a desirable location was secured adjoining the Woman's Building. (Bates 422)

From these descriptions, you can see that the exposition authorities, most of whom were male, felt apathy toward the care of children. They believed that children naturally belonged to the women's sphere of "home" that was separated from men's "world." Not only men but most women believed that rearing and educating their children were their important duty at that time:

Every phase of the rearing and education of children, according to the newest enlightenment of the end of the century, was to be set forth in such palpable and practical fashion that no mother could enter the doors without being stimulated and inspired in her happy vocation. (Bates 422-23)

Consequently, the Board of Lady Managers took care of the Children's Building, beside which the Woman's Building stood like a merciful mother.

4.2 The Administration of the Board of Lady Managers

Since the Board of Lady Managers was formed of women only, it was regarded as a very progressive challenge, and women of that time praised their achievement enthusiastically. In spite of such a general tendency, we should notice the real situation of women in the era of industrialization. At this particular time, the trend of thought seemed to be toward plans and ideas that have to do with elevating the worth of the individual. As Trumble White points out, the idea of individualism is closely related to the "subject of the industrial freedom of women" (White 10). But what was the "industrial free-

dom of women" at that time? Though White puts it "traditional beliefs in regard to what constitutes a fit vocation or avocation for women are disappearing" (White 10), in reality, their mind was not be free to think rationally, nor free to live independently. This is the underlying philosophy in the World's Columbian Fair in the name of "industrial exposition." The World's Columbian Commission created the Board of Lady Managers and assigned it the duty "to appoint one or more members of all committees authorized to award prizes for exhibits which may be produced in whole or in part by female labor" (White 11). This shows the power and the right of the World's Columbian Commission as well as the Board of Lady Managers, who played an important role of giving awards for excellence. It is also indicated that the Committee wanted to demonstrate that women had acquired a considerable place in industrial production and their industrial rights and privileges needed to be protected.

It is true that the technical innovation in the late Nineteenth century reduced the household chores that women were supposed to do and enabled them to go to work and to join many social activities. However, looking back to the 1930's, it was the Industrial Revolution that initially established the division of labor based on sex, distinguishing the men's sphere ("world") from the women's sphere ("home"). It seems that industrial privileges promoted the idea of "progressive women," but in fact, they ended up redefining the two different spheres assumed by men and women. Palmer comments on the industrialization as follows:

The adoption of industrial and commercial pursuits may make her less domestic, destroy family life and the home atmosphere, may have some truth ... We acknowledge freely the home and the privacy of domestic life to be the natural sphere of every woman, who would prefer any other career than that of a happy wife and mother. (Palmer 1894b, 154)

Her address reveals that women, who were supposed to be most progressive at that time, still clung to their sphere and the old values even though they

were able to enjoy the benefits of industrial advancement.

Viewed in this light, the expectation of the Committee to the "industrial Exposition" and the real status of women in the fair is clear: The Board of Lady Managers seemed to be granted great power and rights on the surface, but in fact, they were still manipulated under men's authority.

4.3 The head of the Board of Lady Managers: Mrs. Potter Palmer's Perspective of "Progressive Women"

Lastly, I should like to look at the idea of Mrs. Potter Palmer, the head of the Board of Lady Managers. Whenever she has the chance to speak up about the Board of Lady Managers and the Woman's Building, it seems that she keeps remarking on the greatness of women's work and achievements. Nevertheless, her idea is still based on the conservative ideology and perspective of earlier times. In her speech at the Congress of Women in 1893, we can trace many such ideas. She refers to the social advancement of women and their perception about work and home and insists on women's willingness to stay as keepers of the home:

Men have asked many times whether the Board of Lady Managers thinks it well to promote a sentiment which may tend to destroy the home by encouraging occupations for women which take them out of it. We feel, therefore, obliged to state our belief that every woman, who is presiding over a happy home, is fulfilling her highest and truest function, and could not be lured from it by temptations offered by factories or studios. (Palmer 1894a, 26)

Men she defined as "natural protectors," which seemed to imply men's physical and mental difference and superiority to women, and she also willingly acknowledged men as those

Who have carefully trained themselves for the responsibilities devolving

upon them, and who have, consequently, without question, contributed vastly more than women to the valuable thought, research, invention, science, art and literature, which have become the rich heritage of the human race. (Palmer 1894a, 26)

Thus we see, the most significant evidence that explains women's status at the time of the Fair is the fact that the head of the Board of Lady Managers, Bertha Honoré Palmer, makes her claim under the name of "Mrs. Potter Palmer." As the wife of Chicago financial leader Potter Palmer, Bertha Palmer had long been active both as an arts patron and as a social-reformer, belonging to the Chicago Woman's Club. Thus, Bertha Palmer's "progress" was crucially based on her class and wealth supported by her husband's social power.

5 The Emergence of "New Women"

Looking back at the images and roles of women at the turn of the century that were reflected in the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Fair, we can see the continued existence of women's traditional role models from former periods as well as the idea of spheres. In spite of the emergence of radical movements, the real underlying images of women were of those who struggled to get out from under the spellbinding stereotypical ideology about Victorian women. At that moment, the concept of "New Women" was overwhelming in American society. The "New Women" were considered as intellectual, independent economically as well as mentally, and they did not set marriage as their life goal; even if they got married, they took charge of domestic work and rearing children, not depending upon their husbands. Also in the aspect of fashion, to be suitable to that idea, "New Women" took off their tight corsets, which had bound their waists and minds, and the layered petticoats, which weighed more than five pounds, and put on more casual clothes. Moreover, some of them started to enjoy playing sports, such as tennis and golf, and riding bicycles. In the 1890's, the "Gibson Girls," by Charles

Gibson, was popular as a symbol of "New Women." They were depicted in short hair-styles and short skirts, sometimes even in swim wear on the beach. But the image of "New Women" was more an illusory image of American women than a reflection of the actual status of women at that time. It was only a superficial image toward which the late nineteenth-century women yearned after their experiences in the conservative nineteenth century, not to be confused with their real situations or ideas. They looked radical on the surface; however, in fact, the idea of gender difference, both mentally and physically, was based on spheres and sex roles.

Another ironic aspect of the New Women was that its ideology was applicable only to white women in the middle and upper classes, as the "Gibson Girls" were. In other words, they had the option of taking advantage of the new concepts and opportunities such as professions and social activities. However, women of lower classes and those with different ethnic backgrounds were forced to work for a living. They were left far apart from the idea of "progressive" women who worked for their independence. With such a class gap, the concept of "New Women" was nothing but superficial, not leading the real progress of women. Thus, the "ambiguous" images and roles of women were established in this era.

Conclusion

In conclusion, when you look at women's roles from the nineteenth century up to the twentieth century by investigating the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Fair at Chicago, you can recognize women's struggles and wavering as well as seizing what Trachtenberg claims as the idea of "ambiguity in the women's role." Trachtenberg also mentions the ideas of "ambivalence," "contrast" or "gap" about the Women's Building by pointing out its location and its surroundings at the Fair.

... the building occupied the significant site of the exact junction between the Court of Honor and the Midway Plaisance, just at the point of transi-

tion from the official view of reality to the world of exotic amusement, of pleasure ... Similarly, the dominating sixty-foot statue by Daniel Chester French of a female figure representing the Republic presiding over the Court of Honor taught the populace what to make of the Midway's own "World's Congress of Beauties," a parade of belly dancers and "Forty Ladies from Forty Countries." (Trachtenberg 221-22)

In this passage, he alludes to the ambivalent situation and image of women themselves as well as the Women's Building. As Trachtenberg notes, the late nineteenth century was a transition period for women, and there was a gap within women, which was caused by their different degrees of status and self-awareness. In other words, it was the time to reform not only the social situation for women, but also their awareness of themselves. From this standpoint, the World's Columbian Fair functioned as a social mirror, who reflected the subtle and unsettled status of women, which wavered between ideal images and reality. These women's ambiguous roles might come from their unique or, dare we say, "ironic" footsteps of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century; women seemed to be confined to their separate sphere from men, but in fact, because of the sphere, which was based on women's special abilities, characteristics, and roles, they were able to have the opportunity to achieve contact with wider society. Their social activities, which were designated to keep the women's sphere and roles, allowed women to gain great power and to break out by themselves eventually. This contradiction made women struggle between keeping former morals and proceeding with their reformations. It must be said that the origin of this ironic conclusion would be found in the ideology of the sphere itself. As I have argued in this essay, women's characteristics were highly evaluated and bestowed official roles only within the idea of the sphere. Women were expected to serve the role as the mother of the republic, and also women's "private" work at home came to have an important and "official" meaning. In the ideology of the sphere, the "official" role of women has already been recognized from the beginning. In conclusion, the collapse of the ideology of the women's sphere had

already started at the time of its foundation. The recognition of these ideological and historical backgrounds surrounding women enables to reveal the real role of women at the World's Columbian Fair in 1893.

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